

Secession

Background

In 1812, several New England states considered secession because they opposed the War of 1812. But the war ended before the New Englanders had a chance to go through with their threat. In 1836, South Carolina considered secession in response to a federal tariff it considered too high. However, the threat of force by President Jackson, combined with the enactment of a compromise tariff cooled off the situation. In 1860, Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected President. This time, seven southern states seceded before Lincoln had even taken office.

Secession is Necessary By "Jeff Davison"

More than 2,000,000 votes were cast in southern states in the 1856 and 1860 Presidential elections. The two Republican candidates combined won only 20,000 of those votes (1%). Lincoln was just elected despite the fact that he was not even on the ballot in 10 southern states. It is clear that our region can be ignored. It is time we started our own country.

You may wonder why we fear the Republican Party so much. One reason is that its members want to abolish slavery in the South. Most southerners do not own slaves and look forward to the day when slavery gradually disappears from the south.

But other southerners have invested millions of dollars in slaves. Abolishing slavery without compensating them will destroy the southern economy. Imagine the effect on the north if the government one day seized its factories and railroad locomotives without paying those who built and own them.

Abraham Lincoln claims he is not an abolitionist. But he once said this nation cannot endure half slave and half free. He was not suggesting he will make it all slave, so he must have meant he will make it all free. Even if he is not an abolitionist, most Republicans are, and Lincoln will not resist them for long, especially when he

considers how many Republicans he can make out of ex-slaves. By forming our own nation, we can protect our economy as we gradually free the slaves.

Slavery isn't the only issue on which we disagree. Our economy is based on exporting agricultural products and importing manufactured goods. Therefore, we support free trade.

Northerners make manufactured goods. They support a high tariff on their goods that protects them from competition with Europeans and allows them to raise the price we must pay. A high tariff benefits northerners at our expense.

If they can win elections without us, they will soon raise tariffs so high it will be impossible for us to make a profit growing cotton, rice or tobacco. If we form our own country, we can have low tariffs and free trade.

Since the American Revolution, southerners have always supported individual liberty. Now, a majority of northerners has rejected that principle and embraced the idea of a powerful and dangerous federal government. We should have the right to form our own country, which will be dedicated to the same principles our ancestors fought for almost 100 years ago.

Secession Cannot Be Permitted

By "Sam Austin"

Fellow southerners, what do we gain by seceding? Some of you claim Lincoln wants to abolish slavery in the south. This is simply not true. It is true there are a few Republicans who support abolition, but they are a small minority. The Party's platform in the 1860 presidential election made it clear that they do not intend to abolish slavery where it exists. It seems to me that Lincoln is committed to the U.S. Constitution. He recognizes that, however immoral the institution of slavery, the government must compensate slave owners if it wants to force them to free their slaves.

It is true that Lincoln wants to ban slavery from federal territory. But it makes no sense for southerners who do not own slaves to be angry with this. For, even if slavery is banned in federal territory, southerners who do not own slaves can still live there. But, even more important, if the southern states secede, no southerner will be able to live in federal territory anyway.

It is true that many southerners would benefit if we could set our own tariff. But we are not as united on this issue as secession supporters would have you believe.

The candidate of the high tariff, Whig Party won an average of 47% of the southern vote in Presidential elections from 1836-1856. There are obviously a lot of southerners who support a high tariff. 53% of the population of a region should not be able to force our entire region to secede.

A great principle is at stake here. States cannot be allowed to enter and leave the Union at will. If so, the Union will mean nothing. The candidate of the pro-southern party has won 12 out of the last 16 presidential elections. In 1860, the candidate of the pro-northern party won and now some of my fellow southerners want to secede. How would we have responded if northerners shouted for secession when Virginians were elected president six times in a row?

If states are allowed to enter and leave the union when they please, the federal government will be powerless. It would not be able to pass or enforce any law that is opposed by the citizens of any state for fear that the state will secede. The Union must be preserved or the United States will cease to exist.

Name _____ Date _____

**Secession
Worksheet**

- 1) According to Davison, in how many southern states was Lincoln not on the ballot? _____
- 2) What evidence does Davison provide to show that Lincoln is an abolitionist?

- 3) According to Austin, what percent of southerners voted for the candidate of the high tariff, Whig Party in presidential elections from 1836-1856? _____
- 4) According to Austin, the candidate of the pro-southern party has won how many of the last 16 elections? _____
- 5) Compare and contrast the views of Davison and Austin on whether Lincoln and the Republicans will eventually try to abolish slavery in the South?

- 6) Compare and contrast the views of Davison and Austin on whether a difference of opinion of the tariff is an important enough issue to justify secession?

(Over please)

- 7) Which person do you agree with and what is their most persuasive example or statistic?

- 8) If you had to find a compromise between the two, what would it be and describe what each side would have to give up in your compromise?

- 9) Imagine that the southern states had not seceded in 1860. Predict a sequence of at least three events that you think would have followed Lincoln's election?

1860 Lincoln is elected President
